ACQUISITION PROFESSIONAL (AcqPro) SOFTWARE

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Introduction

In July 1997, Deputy Secretary of Defense John J. Hamre established a corporate policy that digital operation be the method of choice for all acquisition-management and life-cycle support information. He directed that by the end of 2002, the majority of DOD acquisition and logistics operations be based on digital methodologies and products. Thus, paperless acquisition was born.

In today's technology-driven environment, the Army is looking for software programs that will support that digital environment for the entire acquisition life cycle of systems. Current paperless initiatives focus on life-cycle phases of weapon systems related to their solicitation, contract award, modifications, sustainment, contractor payments, and contract close-out actions. Software programs such as the Procurement Automated Document Distribution System, the Standard Procurement System/ Procurement Desktop Defense (SPS/PD2), and the Joint Computer-aided Acquisition and Logistics Support System support these processes in a paper-free environment. However, none of these software programs support the paperless generation of requirements and pre-solicitation documentation, a critical aspect of the paperless process. Acquisition Professional, or AcqPro, fills the "holes" in the paperless process.

What Is AcqPro?

AcqPro was originally developed as the Procurement Management Information System (ProMIS) software program to update the U.S. Army Simulation, Training and Instrumentation Command and the Armament Research, Development and Engineering Center. Other Armed Services and Army commands recognized its potential, and a Joint Configuration Control Board (JCCB) was formed in 1997 to examine its attributes further. The JCCB includes members from the U.S. Navy's Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command; the U.S. Air Force Aeronautical Systems Center, Eglin Air Force Base, FL; and the Program Management Office (PMO), Abrams Tank System, located at the U.S. Army Tank-automotive and Armaments Command (TACOM) in Warren, MI. PMO, Abrams chairs the JCCB, and that office has provided the majority of the funding and support as part of its paperless contracting and integrated data environment efforts.

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AcqPro is an affordable alternative that provides an easy-to-use "tool" to create critical document text while providing samples and online screen guidance. No other software program currently available is specifically targeted for "smart" document generation of all kinds. Although currently targeted for the pre-solicitation and requirements-generation phases of the acquisition cycle, it can also fill document generation needs wherever the current structure does not.

AcqPro uses a WIN95/NT operating system and functions as a "knowledge-based" document generator for pre-solicitation documents. Some of the documents it creates include acquisition plans, justifications for other than full and open competition, source selection plans, multiyear approvals, data items, and scopes of work. AcqPro currently runs on an Oracle database, a Microsoft SQL Server database, or a stand-alone Personal Oracle database. It operates on IBM-based personal computers in a Microsoft Office environment using an Intranet for communication between the computers and the server-located database.

AcqPro is designed to be a knowledge-based document generator that benefits from in-house expertise. It provides a structured framework that includes a Service's or command's best practices validated by subject matter experts and the latest policy and guidance. Experts in acquisition,

systems management, engineering, logistics, quality, and procedures at TACOM are developing the question and answer (Q&A) sessions, document templates, and best-practice samples that will allow use of the system. The key to effective use of AcqPro is development and maintenance of the Q&A sessions and document templates in the database and to keep them current using the most recent command directives and acquisition reform initiatives.

How AcqPro Works

The program begins a user session by opening the "Package Wizard." The Package Wizard consolidates all the document-generation requirements for a specific type of action into one grouped package, selected by answering questions like "Are you buying systems, services, or spares?," "What is the estimated price?," and "Will this be competitive or sole source?" After answering those questions, the program generates a "basic package." The package consists of the document templates, files, and forms needed for that particular acquisition. Once the basic package is developed, the user initiates document generation by opening a Q&A session, answering the questions, and performing a "build." This build is where users receive a document that is tailored to their needs based on the answers provided to the system.

AcqPro builds the document and supports the multiple scenario environments by allowing the user to answer the questions in as many ways and as many times as necessary. If a user is having difficulty answering a question, AcqPro provides online guidance. During document generation and editing, users have built-in access to the guidance (laws, regulations, standard operating procedures, and manuals) needed to help them determine the right documents to use and the final content of the document. This includes direct Internet links to the latest government information sources and samples of comparable documents that are located in AcqPro. The document can be edited in AcqPro by paragraph or as a complete MSWord document.

AcqPro also has the ability for users and guests to review generated documents. Reviewers can add comments and recommendations by using CLIP-IT NOTES, which can be reviewed by the document owner and by other users. This allows the centralized document to be reviewed by other offices and for these offices to recommend changes or approve the documents electronically. Control over changes is managed using the AcqPro security system, which first uses security passwords to limit access to the system. Security also allows the owner of a document to select who can access the document and the limits of that access.

The security system also allows a document owner to pass responsibility and control of a package between users in the system. For example, once the pre-solicitation documentation is finished, reviewed, and approved by a requirements office, control of the package can be transferred from the procurement analyst to the contract specialist in the acquisition office doing the procurement. The contract specialist can import documents such as a scope of work directly into a solicitation and electronically file the imported document and other documents that will be part of the solicitation package.

Other Applications

Although AcqPro has been developed primarily to support requirements offices in their documentation development and approval processes, it is not limited to this function. Procurement offices can use it for document and approval requirements not directly related to or provided by the SPS/PD2. Other offices can also use it to develop documentation and processes as well. Alternate uses of AcqPro depend on the types of documents, templates, and Q&A sessions developed by the using agency. For example, a legal office could put in procurement law data and then develop a Q&A session that would guide legal review of procurement documents submitted to the office. By accessing the correct Q&A session, the lawyer would be provided with the legal requirements the

document should include, samples of prior approved documents, and have the guidance for the review immediately available to them in AcqPro.

Conclusion

PMO, Abrams is currently in the process of loading, training, and testing AcqPro for use by its requirements and procurement offices. These offices are currently updating and expanding the database put in by the AcqPro team. The current version is being used at TACOM to train new system administrators in data input. It is also being used on a limited basis at TACOM for doing acquisition plans, justifications for other than full and open competition, and management decision documents. PMO, Abrams is currently expanding use of the program at TACOM with all sites expected to be using AcqPro by Oct. 1, 2000.

AcqPro is currently available to any U.S. government office. Inquiries about AcqPro and requests for copies of AcqPro presentations may be submitted to **bradyd@tacom.army.mil**. An AcqPro Web site is currently being developed and will be available by August 2000.

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